

VZCZCXYZ0012
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSP #1273/01 3101713
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 061713Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7545
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3623
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 2556

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 001273

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CAR, WHA/OAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [TD](#)

SUBJECT: T&T TO USOAS AMBASSADOR MAISTO: BRING ON THE SOA

Classified By: DCM, Eugene P. Sweeney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: USOAS Permanent Representative Maisto met with T&T PM Manning and FM Piggott on October 20 to discuss the 2009 Summit of the Americas. Manning signaled that the country will be ready for the summit, and hopes to have a successful event that highlights the Caribbean as well as T&T. Manning indicated that Belize had decidedly not dropped its opposition to Guatemala in the UNSC race, and did not appreciate efforts to split the CARICOM block in this or other issues. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) USOAS Permanent Representative Ambassador John Maisto met with Prime Minister Patrick Manning, then, in a separate meeting with Foreign Minister Arnold Piggott on October 20 in Trinidad and Tobago, host of the 2009 Summit of the Americas (SOA). Ambassador Maisto underscored the commitment of the United States to the process, and held out the hand of collaboration at each meeting. The T&T side repeatedly declared its excitement about hosting the 2009 Summit, and seemed inclined to accept U.S. offers of assistance and information sharing.

¶3. (U) Additionally, Ambassador Maisto held a brief introductory meeting with T&T Summit of the Americas technical staff, headed by Ms. Laura West, former head of the Americas Division in the MFA. Ambassador Maisto also gave an extended interview to a journalist from the Business Guardian, highlighting the goals of the U.S. in the OAS and underscoring the links between economic and democratic development.

PM MANNING: T&T COMMITTED TO SOA, FTAA

¶4. (C) In a meeting with Prime Minister Patrick Manning, Ambassador Maisto commended him for his September 27 speech at the OAS, and thanked him for taking on the 2009 SOA. He reaffirmed U.S. commitment to the Summit process, and offered to share experiences and support to T&T as they get into full planning mode. He stated that the 2009 Summit will be one of the first international trips for the newly-elected U.S. President, and noted that the SOA enjoys broad bipartisan support.

¶5. (C) Manning assured Ambassador Maisto that T&T was fully committed to the &FTAA8 summit process (perhaps a Freudian slip), and was already gearing up for it (Cricket World Cup security planning aside). Manning stated that they would not have taken on the SOA if the OAS Summit Secretariat Director Luis Alberto Rodriguez had not been available to T&T. Rodriguez will assume his duties in January 2007, reporting

directly to the PM, and will have the rank of Ambassador. Manning also noted that T&T took careful notes in Argentina on how to handle all the aircraft and other logistics and infrastructure questions. Further, ongoing Cricket World Cup (CWC) planning had been a &nightmare8 but was useful to get security plans in place. Manning suggested that T&T had been reluctant to take on CWC, but reassured Ambassador Maisto that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago was solidly behind the &FTAA Summit8 and that the summit would showcase the Caribbean, not just T&T.

DR MIGHT JOIN CARICOM; UNSC ELECTION LEAVES CARIBBEAN COLD

16. (C) Moving to regional issues, Manning noted that at a recent CARICOM bureau meeting (past, current and incoming chairpersons), they discussed that it was time to revisit admitting the Dominican Republic into CARICOM. Manning suggested that the CARICOM Heads of Government would make the ultimate decision in early November, at their next intersessional meeting. In response to Ambassador Maisto,s suggestion that the OAS look at giving the Interamerican Democratic Charter more teeth, Manning assured him that within CARICOM the countries would suggest to a wayward member that they reconsider their ways.

17. (C) Ambassador Maisto relayed that the Foreign Minister of Belize had informed the U.S. that they were pleased with the progress they had made with Guatemala on the border dispute issue, and that it should not be seen as an obstacle. Manning drew himself back and in a chilly tone reported that at an October 17 recent meeting of the current, past and future CARICOM chairs in St. Kitts, the Vincentian Prime Minister spoke with the Belizean Prime Minister by cell phone and was told, in no uncertain terms, that Belize had not dropped its opposition to Guatemala. Manning further noted that CARICOM was going with Venezuela because of Guatemala,s position in the WTO on bananas, which harmed the smaller economies. He finished by stating that CARICOM did not appreciate efforts to split its ranks.

18. (C) Manning returned to a familiar, recent refrain: that the U.S. has not paid enough attention to the Caribbean. Manning suggested that had the U.S. consulted with CARICOM before backing Guatemala, the U.S. might not have supported Guatemala so strongly. Further, he reiterated that the Caribbean is a strong energy producer for the U.S., and therefore of strategic importance; an importance that he wondered aloud if Washington understood. He further cautioned that other countries, such as China, were entering into the region, possibly at the expense of U.S. influence. Even so, Manning conveyed his appreciation for the recent move to relax restrictions on military education assistance.

FM: T&T COMMITTED TO SOA, DEVELOPMENT, HAITI

19. (C) In a congenial, separate meeting with the newly-appointed Foreign Minister, Arnold Piggott, Ambassador Maisto reiterated offers of U.S. support to T&T for the SOA as well as broaching the OAS pillars of democracy and development. Piggott echoed Manning,s remarks that T&T would be ready for the SOA, and added that they would also appreciate the benefit of experience from those who have already hosted a Summit. He further noted that the PM,s office and the MFA would work closely together on the SOA, which will be pitched as a Caribbean, rather than solely as a T&T affair. Piggott also discussed T&T,s commitment to development via support for education.

110. (C) Ambassador Maisto turned to Haiti, encouraging CARICOM to take a larger role even as the OAS is considering reopening its office there. The Permanent Council is leaning towards appointing a Caribbean national to head the mission. FM Piggott commented that CARICOM &will not turn its back on Haiti8 because it is part of the Caribbean and a part of the

Americas.

REGIONALISM PLAYS WELL IN T&T

¶11. (C) COMMENT: Manning,s comments about the SOA being a regional event are in keeping with his goal of T&T driving further regional integration, which was a hallmark of his tenure as CARICOM Chairman. Secondly, his comments about it being an FTAA summit indicate interest in focusing on further hemispheric economic coordination, also in keeping with Caribbean integration movements. PM Manning, whose party looks in line to win next year,s elections for another five years in power, is solidly behind the SOA and is already laying groundwork to ensure its success. END COMMENT.

¶12. (U) Ambassador Maisto has cleared this cable.

¶13. (U) Meeting participants:

Meeting with PM Manning:

U.S. Representatives:

- USOAS Permanent Representative, Ambassador John Maisto
- Dr. Roy L. Austin, Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago
- Tom Mesa, WHA/EPSC, Deputy SOA Coordinator
- Joe Chamberlain, Political Officer (Notetaker)

T&T Representatives:

- The Honorable Patrick Manning, Prime Minister
- Senator the Honorable Arnold Piggott, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Leonard Wilkinson, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Laura West, Summit of the Americas Office, MFA

Meeting with FM Piggott:

U.S. Representatives:

- USOAS Permanent Representative, Ambassador John Maisto
- Dr. Roy L. Austin, Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago
- Tom Mesa, WHA/EPSC, Deputy SOA Coordinator
- Eugene Sweeney, Deputy Chief of Mission
- Joe Chamberlain, Political Officer (Notetaker)

T&T Representatives:

- Senator the Honorable Arnold Piggott, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Laura West, Summit of the Americas Office, MFA
- Margaret King-Rousseau, Head of the Americas Division, MFA

AUSTIN